Positive Psychology (Special Topics)

PSYC 4381 May Term, 2013

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Course Description

This advanced Psychology course will introduce you to the Positive Psychology movement which is an area of emphasis in many subfields of psychology. The focus of positive psychology is on strength rather than weakness, flourishing rather than struggling. We will address research in many areas of psychology but the focus will primarily be on positive perspectives within social psychology.

Office hours are times that I have set aside to be available for questions, etc. but I will also be available by appointment at other times. Email is usually the best way to get a message to me. If you must miss an exam you must let me know BEFORE the exam. Makeups will be scheduled at instructor's discretion and only with a written excuse. Makeup exams for reasons other than official University absences will be scheduled during scheduled department makeup sessions or by appointment. Things like job schedules, roommate problems, social conflicts, etc. are not valid excuses. If you need to contest an exam score, you have one week from the day the exam was returned to do so. LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Student Learning Outcomes

- On an exam, students should be able to define and understand the major approaches to the scientific study of positive psychology and understand empirical support for those perspectives.
- Students should be able to apply positive psychology principles in a project that involves the broader campus or local community.
- On an exam, students should be able to identify the major topics covered in class and the textbook and understand empirical support for those topics.

Reading:

- Snyder, C.R., Lopez, S. J., & Pedrotti, J. T. (2011). Positive Psychology: The Scientific and Practical Explorations of Human Strengths, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Articles and handout available on Blackboard

Grades:

- Your grade will be determined by performance on 2 in-class exams, a cumulative final exam, participation, and two papers. In-class exams may include both multiple choice, true-false, short answer, and essay sections.

- Each exam counts as 100 points towards the final grade. The first paper is worth 20 points and the second is worth 40. Participation is 10 points. There are 370 possible points for the semester.
- Attendance in lecture is required. The in-class exams are over material presented in class, so attendance will help your grade. On certain unannounced days, I will give points for attendance. Excessive absences over the semester will result in a drop in points. Creating an atmosphere in class that discourages the participation of others (interrupting or insulting classmates) or interferes with the classroom environment (text messaging, reading the newspaper, talking during class, using a computer for activities unrelated to this class) will also result in a drop in points.

Calendar

PSYC 4381 Positive Psychology

Date	Session	Topic	Chapter	Notes
16	Morning	Introducing Positive Psychology	1	
	Afternoon	Perspectives	2	
17	Morning	Strengths	3	
	Afternoon	Strengths		
20	Morning	Well-being	4	
	Afternoon	Developmental themes	5	
21	Morning	***Exam 1***		
	Afternoon	Building better communities	17	Field trip
22	Morning	Gainful employment	16	
	Afternoon	Positive affect	6	Paper #1 due
23	Morning		6	
	Afternoon	Working with affect	7	
24	Morning	Optimal experience	10	
	Afternoon		10	Field trip
28	Morning	***Exam 2***		
	Afternoon	Optimism and hope	8	
29	Morning	Flourishing Relationships	12	
	Afternoon		12	
30	Morning	***Class Presentations***		Paper #2 due
	Afternoon	Future of Positive Psychology	18	
31	Morning	***Final Exam***		

Field Trips and Papers
You will have two off-campus meetings this term. These will allow us to embed our discussion of the topics in an environment that allows for demonstrations beyond the classroom.

The paper topics are briefly defined below. You will get additional details on the papers during class.

Paper #1
What is a strength? Compare the various strength assessments included in the text and discuss what you believe to be the best representation of strengths. How does culture impact our understanding and pursuit of various strengths? Include your scores from the VIA survey that you complete online.

Paper #2
What is "The Good Life?" What contributions from social psychology influence our optimal experiences, health, and definitions of success and well-being? What can we do to be at our best, and how do we define that? How do we create or enhance our campus or broader community to allow for or to encourage flourishing? In addition to your paper, you will need to do a brief presentation in class on your suggestions for building better communities.

Course Policies

- Changes to the syllabus: From time to time, I may make changes to the course plan, topics, or other aspects of the course, including the dates of exams. These changes will be announced in class. You are responsible for keeping up with announcements of changes and other course business.
- The use of cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices not related to class material is not allowed during class. Make sure that all cell phones are turned off or placed on silent during class. You are welcome to bring a laptop or PDA to class for the purpose of taking notes. However, you may not use those devices for anything else (e.g. playing games, checking email) during class. When I suspect a student is using the computer for purposes other than taking notes related to this class, I may ask the student to leave the room, and the student may be counted absent and incur negative participation points.
- Policies for exam days: You need to be on time for exams. I do not normally hand out any exams after the first person has finished and left the room. If you are late for an exam, you will receive a 0 and will not have the opportunity to makeup the exam, except under appropriate, documented circumstances. Once I pass out the exams, you are not allowed to leave the room and return. Take care of any business you need to before the exam starts.
- Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first be registered with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 214-768-1470 or visit http://www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp to begin the process. Once registered, students

should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements.

- Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)
- Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)
- Academic Integrity: Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course and will be dealt with according to the University's Honor Code. As stated by the Honor Council, "Permitting others to prepare their work, using published or unpublished summaries as a substitute for studying required materials, or giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in preparation of work to be submitted are directly contrary to the honest process of learning." A violation of the Code will result in an F for the course. In addition, the student may also be taken before the Honor Council. If you are unclear about this please see the instructor immediately. This can include ACADEMIC SABOTAGE (Intentionally taking any action which negatively affects the academic work of another student.); CHEATING (Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.); FABRICATION (Intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.); FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY (Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate any provision of the Honor Code); and PLAGIARISM (Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise.) A violation of the Code will result in an F for the course. In addition, the student may also be taken before the Honor Council. If you are unclear about this please see the instructor immediately.
- Any study involving observation of or interaction with human subjects which originates at Southern Methodist University, including a class project, report, or research paper, must be reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research and Research-Related Activities. Students should consult with their course instructors early in the course to ascertain if their projects need to be reviewed by the IRB and/or to secure information on appropriate forms and procedures for IRB review. The student's instructor and department chair must sign the application for approval by the IRB.

Letter Grades

Letter	Percentage
A	93-100

A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	Below 60